AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as set forth below in marked-up form.

1.   (Currently Amended) An apparatus for filtering electronic mail and notifying a user, residing ~~on~~ in a set top box connected between a television content provider, an Internet provider having an e-mail server, and a television, comprising~~:~~:

a software program application which enables a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and notification icons which then retains and stores said e-mail filter criteria and icons;

a querying module contained within said software program application which queries said e-mail server to determine whether e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria has arrived at said e-mail server; and

a notifying module also contained within said software program application wherein, upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling said criteria, said application notifies the user by posting said notification icons to the set top box.

2.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the connection between said set top box and said e-mail server is permanent, so that said application continually queries said e-mail server.

3.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the connection between said set top box and said e-mail server is non-permanent, so that said application queries said e-mail server at specific timed intervals.

4.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said set top box contains ~~an~~ multi-tasking Operating System and said application runs on top of said Operating System.

5.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said set top box contains an single-tasking Operating System and said application remains in memory as a Terminate and Stay Resident program and runs intermittently at user-configurable intervals.

6.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said application further includes means for notifying ~~notifies~~ the user of the ~~existing~~ existence of e-mail messages fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria through a notification icon on the television screen.

7.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 6, wherein

said notification icon is configurable by the user, and reflects the content of the e-mail filter criteria.

8.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said application further includes means for notifying ~~notifies~~ the user through the use of an tone generated through the television speaker.

9.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 8, wherein

said tone is configurable by the user, and reflects the content of the e-mail filter criteria.

10.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 6, wherein

said ~~application~~ notifying means notifies the user of a plurality of said e-mail messages wherein each e-mail message satisfies different filter criteria and has a different user notification icon.

11.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said application further includes means for querying ~~queries~~ said e-mail server upon power-up of said set top box, and immediately notifies the user of the existence of any e-mail messages satisfying the user-specified e-mail filter criteria.

12.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said application notifies the user via a pager rather than through said set top box.

13.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said application notifies the user of the existence of a telephone call with Caller ID satisfying said filter criteria, instead of an e-mail message.

14.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said application notifies the user of another user attempting to make Instant Message contact with said first user.

15.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein newer versions of said application are downloaded to said set top box by said Internet provider.

16.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 15, wherein said downloading of newer versions can distinguish between different types of set top boxes, and make adjustments to the content of said download accordingly.

17.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said application is not resident on said set top box, but is resident on said e-mail server.

18.   (Currently Amended) An ~~application~~ apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said set top box is connected to said e-mail server through a middle server, where said application is resident on said middle server.

19.   (Currently Amended) A method of filtering e-mail messages and notifying a user, comprising:

installing a software program on a set top box, wherein said set top box is connected both to a TV content provider and an e-mail server;

configuring said program with specific e-mail criteria and ~~also~~ notification symbols;

queuing incoming e-mail messages at said e-mail server;

querying said e-mail server as to whether any of said queued messages fulfill said criteria; and

notifying a user that e-mail messages fulfilling said criteria are available on said e-mail server.

20.   (Currently Amended) An e-mail filtering and notification ~~application~~ apparatus, comprising:

a set top box, connected between a TV content provider, an Internet provider having an e-mail server, and a TV;

user-input means for allowing a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and notification icons;

retaining and storing means for retaining and storing said criteria and icons;

querying means, for querying said e-mail server to determine whether e-mail fulfilling said user criteria has arrived at said e-mail server;

notification means for notifying the user of said arrival by posting said notification icons to the Set Top Box,

wherein said notification icons relate to the subject matter of said arriving e-mail.

21.   (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ A software program application for filtering electronic mail and notifying a user, residing on a set top box connected between a television content provider, · an Internet provider having an e-mail server, and a television, comprising;

said software program application enabling a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and notification icons which then retains and stores said e-mail filter criteria and icons;

a querying module which queries said e-mail server to determine whether e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria has arrived at said e-mail server;

a notifying module wherein, upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling said criteria, said application notifies the user by posting said notification icons to the set top box.